

June 9

## Fr MICHAEL GEOGHEGAN 6 April 1905 – 9 June 1975



Michael Geoghegan (gayghan) was born in Belmanach, Morayshire, Scotland and educated at the Mount. He entered the Society in 1923, did his regency at Leeds and was ordained in 1937. In theology he was a 'willing horse' and got involved in a variety of things, notably as a stage hand. But he suffered from migraine and a stutter which latter hindrance he worked hard to overcome.

A brief attempt at learning Shona at Mutoko in 1940 was interrupted by a call to St George's where he became rector in 1941. Almost immediately he got malaria and Dr Blackie insisted he take a term off at the Cape. The war was a hard time at St George's and on his return, he had to struggle with staff shortages, growing enrolment (from 220 to 356 in his time) and the needs for new classrooms and dormitories. Two thirds of the boys boarded. But with 'fortitude, kindness and tenacity' (Tom Crehan) he kept at it and presided over a 'devoted, cheerful and hard-working community'. Even as rector, he was in charge of a large junior dormitory for several years.

But Mike had a broad vision and kept his eye on the bigger picture. There was the moment in June 1944 when he called the whole school into the chapel and announced the Normandy landings. He had exposition before the Blessed Sacrament each Saturday evening to pray for a successful outcome to the war.

There were great celebrations for the Golden Jubilee of the college in 1946 with High Mass, a banquet for the whole school and guests, a play and (something for English readers) the Trooping of the Colour. Michael Geoghegan was held in respect and affection by the boys, one of whom said, 'he could look right through you and know whether you were telling the truth.' By 1949 his long stint as rector was over and he became the bishop's secretary, something that was planned for years. He also edited *The Shield* and made it not a parochial magazine but a wide-ranging Catholic review. His relationship with Chichester was creative! The bishop would listen to his reasoning, ponder it and then do the opposite! Geoghegan would later say the bishop was always right! He also had the task of advising on religious education in schools but felt unable, because of his lack of mission experience, to advise in African schools. He refused to be a 'desk priest' and took every opportunity to celebrate Mass in the Cathedral and visit European schools and convents where he was much in demand. He believed in the 'apostolate of the dinner table' but the political troubles of the 1960s weighed on him and he found it difficult to speak on the issues. In this he was like Archbishop Markall. The other churches had spokesmen willing to speak at any time but the Catholics could not find their voice.